(ii) In March, '96, the Council drew up a set of guidelines expected to be observed by the Press while publishing reports on the election process. It had appointed panelists all over the country to monitor the role of the media during the period of last general elections.

(iii) Further, in view of the staggered polls during the last Parliamentary Elections, the Council issued on 19th April, '96, the exit-poll guidelines appealing to the Press not to publish the exit-poll surveys, however, genuine they may be, till the last of the polls was held. This was with a view to ensure that the electoral process was kept pure and the voters' mind was not influenced by external factors.

(iv) The effect of these guidelines was encouraging as the Press by and large heeded to the advice and the guidelines of the PCI in the matter of pre-poll and exit-poll surveys and the coverage of the election process.

Telephone Under "Safe Custody".

*579. SHRI RAM SAGAR : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the telephones are placed under the safe custody only on deposit of charges as demanded by Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited/Telecommunications;

(b) if so, the criteria adopted therefor;

(c) the period for which the telephone can be kept under the safe custody;

(d) whether in such cases the regular telephone bills including the rent charges are sent to the subscribers;

(e) if so, the reasons for sending regular bills to subscribers;

(f) the reasons for inordinate delay in placing the telephone under safe custody and restoring the same on request; and

(g) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to check such delay and billings ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) to (d) Safe custody of telephones are of two types :

1. Short term safe custody.
2. Long term safe custody.

Short term safe custody

Only the telephones working from non electronic exchanges and from electronic exchanges having no dynamic locking facility are permitted to be put under short term safe custody. The minimum period of safe custody is seven days and the maximum period is 90 days. The rental charges for the short term safe custody period are collected through telephone bills.

Long term safe custody

(i) Telephone connections from non-electronic exchanges and from electronic exchanges having no dynamic locking facility can be put under long term safe custody. The minimum period for long term safe custody for these type of telephone connections is more than three months.

(ii) Telephone connections working from electronic exchanges having dynamic locking facility can be put under long term safe custody for a minimum period of over six months.

The charges for telephones put under long term safe custody are payable in advance.

(e) Regular bills are sent to the subscribers since the rentals for short term safe custody are not collected in advance.

(f) The prescribed period for putting telephone under long term safe custody is seven days. Restoration period for long term safe custody is one month on receipt of request. For short term safe custody telephones, it is one week.

(g) MTNL/Telecom Circles monitor the implementation of the prescribed norms and the procedure.

[Translation]

Advertisements by SAIL

*580. SHRI R.L.P. VERMA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) the annual amount provided for advertisements by the Steel Authority of India Limited and the details of expenditure incurred thereon during each of the last three years;

(b) whether advertisements help in increasing the sale of Steel and the rate of increase in the production is in proportion to that of the expenditure incurred on the advertisements; and

(c) if so, the details of increase in production and the increase in the expenditure on advertisements during the above period ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) The annual amount provided for advertisements and publicity by Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), including expenditure on statutory advertisements etc. in the last three years, has been Rs. 13 crores (1993-94), Rs. 20 crores (1994-95), and Rs. 25 crores (1995-96). The

expenditure incurred on advertisements and publicity has been Rs. 8.23 crores, Rs. 9.69 crores and Rs. 17.67 crores respectively.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Advertisements do help in maintaining and further increasing the level of sales of steel and also serve other important objectives like building brand equity, resource mobilisation, increase in productivity etc. having regard to the increasingly competitive environment in which SAIL is operating. SAIL also requires to raise substantial additional resources from the market for funding its capital requirements, particularly since it does not receive any budgetary support from the Government. Advertisement campaigns help SAIL in maintaining and increasing its market share as well as building an image with its customers, general public and investors. An enlarged investor base is required for borrowing funds, especially since funds from conventional sources are now more difficult to obtain. Thus public deposits have increased by Rs. 525 crores from 1993-94 to 1995-96, and stand at Rs. 1653 crores as on 31/03/1996. Between 1993-94 and 1995-96 the production (Saleable Steel) increased by about 0.65 Million Tonnes (from 8.5 MT to 9.15 MT); total sales by about Rs. 3039 crores (from Rs. 11671 crores to Rs. 14710 crores); and expenditure on advertisement and publicity increased by about Rs. 9.44 crores (from Rs. 8.33 crores to Rs. 17.67 crores).

[English]

Shipbreaking Industry

5352. SHRI SANAT MEHTA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) the position of Shipbreaking Industry in the country among the countries where shipbreaking activity is undertaken;

(b) whether fall in the shipbreaking at Alang has been noticed by the Government during 1995-96;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) As per available information, India has ranked first for the past two years among the countries where shipbreaking activity is undertaken.

(b) and (c) According to Government of Gujarat, the number of ships broken at Alang during 1995-96 as against 1994-95 has been as under :

Year	Number of ships broken	Light Displacement Tonnes (LDT) (in lakh tonnes)
1994-95	301	21.7
1995-96	183	12.5

(d) The major reasons for fall in shipbreaking at Alang during 1995-96 are as under :—

1. Fall in the value of rupee against US Dollar, and

2. Recession in the scrap market.

VRS Scheme

5353. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether Voluntary Retirement Scheme has been introduced for employees in Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Limited;

(b) if so, the number of employees who have opted it upto March 1996;

(c) whether any modifications have been made in the matter of payment of 3 months salary for each completed year of service instead of $1^1/_2$ months salary for each completed year of service applicable to the employees governed by this scheme;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the financial implications involved in the aforesaid scheme ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir, based on the guidelines issued by the Department of Public Enterprises a scheme of Voluntary Retirement has been introduced in Bengal Chemicals and Pharmaceuticals Limited from January, 1992. The number of employees who have taken voluntary retirement under this scheme upto March, 1996 is 433.

(a) No Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(e) According to available information an amount of Rs. 6.50 crores have been provided to BCPL from NRF to meet the cost of the existing VRS.

Construction of Pilgrim Rest House at Nemawar

5354. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government had sanctioned the construction of a pilgrim rest-house at Nemawar in Madhya Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details and the latest position of the said construction work at the sanctioned project;